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ABSTRACT

To ascertain the status of non-traditional credit in Texas post-secondary institutions a questionnaire was mailed to 54 senior colleges and 52 two-year colleges; response rates of 87% and 98% were achieved, respectively. Results indicated that a larger percentage of two-year colleges (80% vs. 72%) were willing to grant some kind of credit for non-traditional learning experiences. Of the four-year schools, 68% granted credit in academic hours with 60% of these applying the hours to an academic degree. Continuing Education Units (CEU's) were granted by 6% of the four-year colleges; 2% granted technical credit hours; and 2% used an advanced placement procedure with no actual credits granted. Various methods were used to verify learning: 47% used some form of validation exam, 43% used verification of experience records, 13% used personal interviews, and 23% used some other method. Of the community colleges, 76% applied the credits to an associate degree and 25% to a special certificate. CEU's were granted by 8% of the two-year colleges, 65% granted vocational credit hours, and 37% granted technical credit hours. To validate learning, 53% used a validation exam, 35% used a verified experience record, 6% used a personal interview for evaluation, and 29% used some other method. The maximum number of credits allowed ranged from three to 48; 12% indicated no maximum. The survey instrument is appended. (MP)

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A SURVEY OF NON-TRADITIONAL CREDIT IN TEXAS

By Dr. R. B. Golemon, Ranger Junior College

The question is often asked of academic deans and college counselors about the availability of college credit for "non-traditional learning experiences." This research addresses itself to answering this question for Texas.

The Texas Association of Junior and Community College Instructional Administrators (TAJCCIA) has had a research committee since 1972 as a result of a recommendation by Dr. James Reynolds of the University of Texas College of Education. Subsequent years have seen the development of a basic format for reporting which culminated in the production each year of a research report by the committee. These reports cover quite a latitude of information in areas that are a concern to instructional administrators in Texas Junior Colleges. This annual report is filed with ERIC for those interested in its contents.

The research committee requested the researcher to acertain the status of non-traditional credit policies in the colleges and universities of Texas. A survey instrument was prepared and mailed to fifty-four senior colleges and universities and fifty-two two-year colleges. The response was gratifying. Forty-seven of the senior colleges and universities responded (87%) and fifty-one of the junior colleges (98%).

The cover letter addressed to the instructional administrator defined non-traditional learning as "any learning not under the supervision of college or university personnel."

This definition was intended to cover any interpretation or contingency as to the occurence of the learning experience, on-the-job-training, self-instruction, divine inspiration, and/or intuition.

The instrument for gathering the information was basically a check list with places for comment. (See attachment) The request was for the respondent to report the official policy of his/her institution. The responses were frank and to the point.

As the researcher anticipated a larger percent of the two-year colleges indicated a willingness to grant some kind of credit for non-traditional learning experiences (72% to 80%); and, conversely, fewer granted no credit at all (20% to 28%). (Percentages are from the reporting population.)

When one gets past the initial policy question: "Do you grant credit for non-traditional learning?", the analysis becomes a little more complicated and more interesting. Many colleges indicate they will grant credit in several ways applicable to several programs or different degrees. Sixty-eight percent of the four-year schools grant credit in academic hours with sixty percent applying these hours to an academic degree; six percent grant CEU credit; two percent technical credit hours; and two percent use an advanced placement procedure where no actual hours are granted (The applicant is not required to "replace" the credits earned by the advance). Fifteen percent of the four-year schools apply the credits granted for non-traditional

learning to a technical degree, nine percent may apply the credits tc an associate degree and nine percent apply them to special degrees or certificates.

One of the most fascinating bits of information about the granting of credits for non-traditional learning is in the area of its verification. Summation of the percentages below indicates that many schools use more than one method of verifying the learning: forty-seven percent use some type of validation exam, forty-three percent use a verification of experience, thirteen percent use some sort of personal interview evaluation, and twenty-three percent use something other than the three preceding (such as ACE, CLEP, USAFI, a portfolio, or an exhibition of competency, especially in a manual skill area).

The maximum number of units acceptable varied considerably. The smallest number for maximum is eighteen (four percent) and the largest number is ninety-eight units with thirteen percent inidcating no maximum. The largest number of respondents indicating a specific maximum is seventeen percent with thirty units. This spread from eighteen to ninety-eight and no maximum limit (whatever that means) credits, indicates there are some senior colleges in Texas who will grant from one semester to nearly three years of credit toward a baccalaureate degree. One could hardly call them strict traditionalists.

An analysis of the junior/community colleges is just as variable as the four-year schools. Except for granting baccalaureate degrees, the two-year colleges are as diverse

in their use of non-traditional credits. Seventy-six percent apply the credits to an associate degree (no deferentiation was made here as to academic or technical-vocational since most technical-vocational programs require some academic credits for the degree); twenty-five percent would apply the credits to a special certificate and two percent give credit where the student was not working toward a degree program.

Eight percent of the two-year colleges grant credit as CEUs, sixty-five percent grant academic credit hours, thirty-three percent grant vocational credit hours, and thirty-seven percent grant technical credit hours. All credits fit into these four classifications.

Verification of the non-traditional learning experience takes as varied an approach as that in the four-year schools. Fifty-three percent of the two-year schools use a validation exam, thirty-five percent use a verified experience record, six percent use a personal interview for evaluation, and twenty-nine percent use some other procedure (such as CLEP, ACE, self-evaluation, or self-paced instructional experience). Obviously some colleges use more than one method.

Since most two-year colleges stipulate that twenty-four credit hours must be earned from their institution to receive an associate degree, there is a practical limit to the number of hours which these institutions will grant toward a degree. This is reflected in most of the responses to the maximum number of credits an institution will allow/accept/admit. The responses ranged from three credits to

forty-eight credits with twelve percent indicating no maximum (this leads one to assume sufficient non-traditional experiences could be approved for a degree without having the benefit of college instruction of any kind). It is doubtful that the responding colleges will honor such a policy.

As indicated in the initial paragraph, TAJCCIA is interested in the present policy of colleges and universities in Texas as to non-traditional learning experiences for college credit. This brief survey indicates that there have been some changes in policy, not only in the four-year schools but in the two-year colleges as well, within the past ten years. (To the purist, the researcher can only offer his fifteen years experience as an academic dean to substantiate the preceding statement. He knows of no research of policy in Texas in this area in 1969.) In fact many respondents foot-noted their responses indicating the possibility of more liberal acceptance of non-traditional credits in the near future.

There are some fairly obvious conjectures that can be made from this study:

1. More than half the four-year colleges and universities in Texas will accept some form of non-traditional learning credits toward a degree (34 out of 54).
2. Most two-year colleges will accept some form of non-traditional learning credits toward a degree (41 out of 52).

3. Any individual who is knowledgeable in an area, especially a technical skill, can find a college in Texas which will grant substantial credit toward a degree for proof of proficiency in that area.
4. The "traditional university" is rapidly disappearing in favor of the "learning institution" for the masses who want direction and professionally supervised learning experiences.
5. The spectre of static enrollments has gotten the attention of the pragmatic administrator.

One other tid-bit that emerged from this study shows that there are a few two-year schools which are as "traditional" as the old cliché implies. These are primarily liberal arts private colleges, especially church supported colleges. But, then, their basic purpose is different from that of the community/junior college. Bless them! For "sweet are the uses of adversity..." (As You Like It, II, 1, 12-18).

TAJCCIA SURVEY SUMMARY

Senior Colleges & Universities

Percentages indicated below are based on the responding population and are rounded to the nearest whole number. Responses are from forty-seven of fifty-four institutions (87%). Percentages in parenthesis are ratios of those who grant credit.

1. Do you grant credit for non-traditional learning experience?

   72% yes 28% no

2. If you do, which of the following do you use?

   A. 47% (65%) Validation exam

   B. 43% (59%) Verified experience record

   C. 13% (18%) Evaluation by personal interview

   D. 23% (32%) Other (Briefly explain)
   Mostly standard tests (ACE, CLEP, etc.)

3. What is the maximum number of units?

   Range: 18 units to no maximum
   18 units to 98 units (practical)

   17% maximum is 30 units

   Median: 36 units

4. If you grant credit, is it

   A. 6% (9%) CEUs?

   B. 68% (94%) Academic semester hours?

   C. 0% (0%) Vocational contact hours/credit hours?

   D. 2% (3%) Technical contact hours/credit hours?

   E. 2% (3%) Other (Briefly explain)

5. Are credits applicable to

   A. 60% (82%) Baccalaureate Degree (Academic)?

   B. 15% (21%) Baccalaureate Degree (Technical)?

   C. 9% (12%) Associate Degree?

   D. 0% (0%) Special Certificate?

   E. 9% (12%) Other? (Briefly explain)
   Special degrees (BAAS, etc.)

TAJCCIA SURVEY SUMMARY

Two-year Colleges

Percentages indicated below are based on the responding population and are rounded to the nearest whole number. Responses are from fifty-one of fifty-two junior/community colleges (98%). Percentages in parenthesis are ratios of those who grant credit.

1. Do you grant credit for non-traditional learning experience?

   80% Yes 20% No

2. If you do, which of the following do you use?

   A. 53% Validation exam
   B. 35% Verified experience record
   C. 6% Evaluation by personal interview
   D. 29% Other (Briefly explain)
      Mostly standard tests (ACE,CLEP, etc.)

3. What is the maximum number of units?

   Range: 3 units to no maximum
          3 units to 48 (practical)

   Median: 25 units

4. If you grant credit is it

   A. 8% (10%) CEUs?
   B. 65% (80%) Academic semester hours?
   C. 33% (39%) Vocational contact hours/credit hours?
   D. 37% (46%) Technical contact hours/credit hours?
   E. 0% (0%) Other (Briefly explain)

5. Are credits applicable to

   A. 0% (0%) Baccalaureate Degree (Academic)
   B. 0% (0%) Baccalaureate Degree (Technical)
   C. 76% (95%) Associate Degree
   D. 25% (32%) Special Certificate
   E. 2% (3%) Other (Briefly explain)
      Not working toward a degree

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